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Atari Online News, Etc.
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A-ONE #1540 10/11/13

~ No More Facebook Hiding ~ People Are Talking! ~ New Line of iPads?
~ Gppgle, HP Chromebook! ~ More Silk Road Arrests! ~ Yahoo Pretties Email!
~ Activision Deal Delay! ~ The Most & Least Wired! ~ Chromebook Launched!

~ ~ PC Shipments Fall Again ~

-* GTA V Breaks 7 Workd Records *-
-* Suspect in Blackhole Case Arrested! *-
-* Russia Plans Web Search Named After Sputnik *-

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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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The leaves are starting to change in my neck of the woods, which can only mean that the lawn will soon be blanketed with leaves. While this is a really nice time of the year, cleaning up leaves can be a real pain! I guess it will be over soon enough!

For another straight week, online news, of interest to us, has been fairly sparse. Lots of "tech news" but not a whole lot that is very interesting unless you’re a cell phone fanatic; and I’m not nor do I believe that our readers are, either. So, we’ll go with what we have for the week and hope that things pick up!

Until next time...

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Grand Theft Auto V Breaks Seven World Records !
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Court Nixes Ruling Delaying Activision Deal!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Grand Theft Auto V Breaks Seven World Records

Rockstar s marketing budget seems to have paid off. Not only has Grand Theft Auto V generated more $1 billion in revenue, it has also set a new bar for entertainment sales altogether. Guinness World Records confirmed

on Tuesday that GTA V has broken six sales world records, and a seventh for its trailer, since going on sale three weeks ago. Some of the enormous properties that GTA has now surpassed include Call of Duty, The Avengers and Avatar.

Although the game is set in an alternate reality Los Angeles, developer Rockstar North is based in Europe and Guinness World Records Editor-in-Chief Craig Glenday said that GTA totally deserves to be recognized as an icon of modern British culture, and we re thrilled to be able to feature the game in the record books. Gaming is no longer a niche hobby, as [GTA V] has proved, and how exciting that it s taken on the might of Hollywood and won!

Here is the full list of records broken by GTA V according to Guinness World Records:

1. Best-selling action-adventure videogame in 24 hours
2. Best-selling videogame in 24 hours
3. Fastest entertainment property to gross $1 billion
4. Fastest videogame to gross $1 billion
5. Highest grossing videogame in 24 hours
6. Highest revenue generated by an entertainment product in 24 hours
7. Most viewed trailer for an action-adventure videogame

Court Nixes Ruling Delaying Activision Deal

The Delaware Supreme Court on Thursday overturned a judge’s ruling that delayed the $8.2 billion sale of Vivendi’s majority stake in Activision Blizzard Inc. back to the video game maker and an investor group led by CEO Bobby Kotick and co-chairman Brian Kelly.

The ruling clears the way for the deal to proceed before Tuesday’s deadline.

Barely an hour after the court heard oral arguments, Chief Justice Myron Steele announced that the court had unanimously determined that the deal does not require the approval of Activision’s minority shareholders, as a Court of Chancery judge had ruled last month.

"The stock purchase agreement here contested is not a merger, business combination or similar transaction," Steele said, using disputed language from Activision’s corporate charter that was at the heart of the legal fight.

Activision shares closed up 77 cents, or 4.7 percent, at $17.05 Thursday. The stock price has risen by more than 50 percent over the past year, reaching a 52-week high of $18.43 in July shortly after the deal was announced.

Vivendi SA, a French media conglomerate that owns 61 percent of Activision, announced in July that it would sell most of its stake in the

video game company, the maker of "World of Warcraft" and "Call of Duty," in an effort to improve Vivendi's balance sheet.

Santa Monica, Calif.-based Activision would buy $5.83 billion worth of its shares at $13.60 apiece, while the investor group led by Kotick and Kelly would purchase another $2.34 billion worth.

The deal would leave Vivendi with a 12 percent stake in Activision, while the investor group would control 24.9 percent. The rest of the shares would be traded on the stock market.

The proposed transaction, which carries an Oct. 15 termination date, was derailed after a lone Activision shareholder filed a last-minute, class-action complaint last month, asking for a temporary restraining order and arguing that minority shareholders should be allowed to vote on the deal because it amounted to a business combination or similar transaction involving Vivendi.

"This is a complicated transaction," shareholder attorney Michael Hanrahan argued Thursday. He noted that the stock purchase agreement involves a shell holding company and hundreds of millions of dollars in tax breaks known as net operating loss carry forwards, making it far more complicated than a straight share repurchase by Activision.

But attorneys for Activision and Vivendi argued that the Chancery Court judge erred in ruling that the deal fell within the scope of language in Activision's charter calling for a minority shareholder vote on certain transactions involving the company and Vivendi. They also said the judge was wrong to convert the shareholder's motion for a temporary restraining order into a request for a preliminary injunction, which he then granted.

"The lower court order has stopped this deal in its tracks," said attorney William Savitt, arguing Thursday that the deal was little more than a share repurchase by Activision.

Attorneys for Activision and Vivendi had warned that the deal could fall apart after Tuesday's deadline, even though financing for the transaction remains in place through mid-December.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Suspect in 'Blackhole' Cybercrime Case Arrested in Russia

Russian authorities have arrested a man believed to be responsible for distributing a notorious software kit known as "Blackhole" that is widely used by cyber criminals to infect PCs, according to a person familiar with the situation.

A former Russian police detective in contact with Russia's federal

government told Reuters that the suspect, who is known in hacking circles as "Paunch," had been arrested. He provided no details.

Blackhole is a piece of malicious software that hackers install on web servers that then automatically infect personal computers when users visit a tainted site.

It contains an arsenal of tools for attacking PCs, each of which leverage vulnerabilities in computers. It probes potential victims looking for a way in, then attacks when it finds a weakness.

Once they are in, cyber criminals typically install other, more specialized programs on the computers of their victims. They include tools for engaging in identity theft and selling fake anti-virus software.

Security experts say that Blackhole's developers regularly update the product so that customers can exploit the newest vulnerabilities uncovered in PCs. The ones most widely exploited include Microsoft Corp's Windows and Internet Explorer, Adobe Systems Inc's Reader and Flash, and Oracle Corp's Java software.

Officials in Russia could not immediately be reached for comment on the arrest.

A spokesman for Europol in the Hague said that the European crime-fighting agency "had been informed that a high-level suspected cyber criminal" was arrested in Russia. He declined to elaborate.

Russian cyber criminals who confine themselves to attacking targets in other countries are rarely arrested, so the capture of Paunch was cause for some celebration among security researchers.

Not all of those arrested are ultimately convicted, however, and even some convicted of stealing millions of dollars have been released on probation.

Russia has one of the largest pools of talented hackers and an advanced underground economy that unites customers and programmers with those who control networks of compromised computers and can install new malicious programs at will.

Police Arrest 8 in International Silk Road Busts

Authorities in Britain, Sweden, and the United States have arrested eight more people following last week's closure of Silk Road, a notorious black market website which helped dealers to sell drugs under the cloak of anonymity, officials and media said Tuesday.

In the U.K., the country's newly-established National Crime Agency warned that more arrests were on the way.

Most if not all the arrests took place within a couple of days of last week's capture of Silk Road's alleged mastermind, Ross Ulbricht, in San Francisco, suggesting that authorities may now be busy unraveling the network of drug dealers who made fortunes peddling illicit substances through the site.

Britain’s National Crime Agency said it had seized millions of pounds (dollars) worth of bitcoins, the electronic currency used on the site, and the agency’s director general, Keith Bristow, said in a statement that other online drug dealers should expect a knock on their door.

"These latest arrests are just the start; there are many more to come," he said.

Silk Road gained widespread notoriety two years ago as a black market bazaar where visitors could buy and sell hard drugs using bitcoins, a form of online cash which operates independent of any centralized control. A so-called "hidden site," Silk Road used an online tool known as Tor to mask the location of its servers. While many other sites sell drugs more or less openly, Silk Road’s technical sophistication, its user-friendly escrow system and its promise of near-total anonymity quickly made it among the best known.

Officials say the black market website brokered more than $1 billion in sales before the FBI collared Ulbricht at a public library on Oct. 1. In its complaint, the bureau said it had managed to copy the contents of the site’s server something one expert said would likely provide international authorities with detailed information about the site’s dealers.

"Any large sellers on Silk Road should be very nervous," said Nicholas Weaver, a researcher with the International Computer Science Institute in Berkeley and the University of California, San Diego.

Silk Road’s eBay-style customer review system means that months’ worth of sales history are now in law enforcement hands, Weaver said in an email, while the traceable nature of bitcoin transfers means the FBI "can now easily follow the money."

Britain’s Crime Agency said its arrests were carried out only hours after Ulbricht was detained. It called the suspects "significant users" of Silk Road and described them as three men in their 20s from the northern English city of Manchester and a man in his 50s from southwestern England.

U.S. authorities have charged two people in Bellevue, Washington, a city just east of Seattle, after identifying one of them as a top seller on Silk Road. He was arrested on Oct. 2, while his alleged accomplice turned herself in the next day.

In Sweden, two men from the coastal city of Helsingborg were arrested on suspicion of distributing cannabis over Silk Road, the local Helsingborgs Dagblad reported Tuesday. The newspaper did not say when the pair had been detained.

Britain’s Crime Agency, which became operational only this month, said the arrests sent a message to criminals that the anonymity touted by sites like Silk Road is an illusion.

"The hidden Internet isn’t hidden and your anonymous activity isn’t anonymous," it said. "We know where you are, what you are doing and we will catch you."

Facebook No Longer Lets Users Hide from Search

Facebook is getting rid of a privacy feature that let users limit who can find them on the social network.

Facebook Inc. said Thursday that it is removing a setting that controls whether users could be found when people type their name into the website's search bar.

Facebook says only a single-digit percentage of the nearly 1.2 billion people on its network were using the setting.

The change comes as Facebook is building out its search feature, which people often use to find people they know or want to know on the site.

Facebook, which is based in Menlo Park, Calif., says users can protect their privacy by limiting the audience for each thing they post about themselves.

Russia Plans State-backed Web Search Engine Named After Sputnik

State-controlled telecoms group Rostelecom plans an internet search engine named after the Sputnik satellite, Vedomosti newspaper said on Friday, though analysts said the aim to muscle into the highly competitive Russian market was doomed.

The government has made moves to boost control over the Internet, but a state-backed search engine, to be called www.sputnik.ru, would face leading search engine company Yandex, with 62 percent of the market, U.S. giant Google and Mail.Ru.

"Search engines are a completely different area from the telecoms service business in which Rostelecom is involved," said VTB analyst Ivan Kim in a research note. "With its lack of expertise, the venture is unlikely to meet with success."

Rostelecom did not immediately reply to a request for comment about the project, to be named after the first man-made satellite, which was launched in October 1957.

The new search engine may have to be used by state institutions as a default tool, said Vedomosti, citing sources at Rostelecom and other Internet companies in its report. It said the project had cost $20 million so far.

Kim said the plan looked like it was imposed on Rostelecom by the state and would most likely be a cash drain.

Russia, with the largest internet audience in Europe, has increased state control over the Web, including launching a black list of sites distributing content such as child pornography, but which critics said could boost censorship.

Rostelecom is trying to hire developers from rivals to work on the search engine project, expected to be launched in the first quarter of 2014, Vedomosti added. The project has so far indexed about half of the Russian

Internet, it said.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch analysts said in a note that developing high-quality search technology may require the best talent and long research and development and that the quality of search results may be well below that of leading firms.

"Even if the launch of Sputnik is well-executed, we do not expect it could significantly eat into the market shares of Yandex or Google," the Merrill Lynch analysts wrote.

Google and HP Team Up to Bring You a $279 Sleek Chromebook

HP and Google want the world to take a break from tablets for a little bit. The two companies have joined forces to announce the latest laptop based on Google’s web-browser based Chrome OS - the HP Chromebook 11.

You can think of the Chromebook 11 as netbook (remember those?) with a nicer hardware design and specifications. The 2.3-pound laptop, which will be available starting today at various retailers for $279, has an 11.6-inch, IPS 1366 x 768-resolution display and a comfortable chiclet keyboard and a shiny white design.

The design is very reminiscent of Apple’s old plastic white Macbook, but with a few tricks: it has a magnesium frame with no screws and it has some color accents. You have your choice of blue, green, red or yellow framing around the keyboard.

Google and HP have also paid special attention to the charger. The microUSB charger can also charge most non-Apple tablets and smartphones.

Inside the specifications aren’t as impressive - it essentially has the guts of a tablet or a smartphone. The notebook is powered by a dual-core Exynos processor and 2GB of RAM. But that might be all the power you need to run Chrome OS, which unlike Windows or Mac OS, is based solely around a web browser.

While there is offline support for Google documents and other apps, this a laptop that is best when connected to a Wi-Fi network. In fact, for its $279 price Google also includes 12 free vouchers for Gogo’s in-flight Wi-Fi.

While the idea of having a laptop that was only useful when there was wireless was a crazy idea years ago, Chromebooks have become increasingly popular. On Amazon.com Samsung’s $250 Chromebook has long been the most popular laptop and Linus Upson, a vice president of engineering at Chrome says, "Chromebooks are the only segment of the laptop market that is growing."

The Chromebook 11 is available at Best Buy, Amazon Google Play and HP’s website.

HP Launches $279 Chromebook

In addition to the recently introduced Chromebook14, HP has presented the Chromebook11, an 11.6-inch notebook running the Chrome OS. The device is now available in the US and will be offered in other markets over the coming months.

Compact and light, weighing in at 1kg, the Chromebook11 boasts a 10-second start-up time and a 6-hour battery life. Further highlighting the ultra-mobile quality of the notebook, HP mentioned that 3G/4G versions will be available with a micro-SIM slot, although pricing and availability on these versions has yet to be announced.

Under the hood, the Chromebook11 packs an Exynos 5250 processor, 2GB of RAM and a 16GB SSD. Users can also take advantage of 100GB of cloud storage at their fingertips through Google Drive (free for two years with purchase).

HP is currently one of three third-party companies that sell Chromebooks, along with Samsung and Acer, not counting Google, who presented its Pixel notebook a few months ago. Asus and Toshiba, meanwhile, are planning to launch notebooks running the Chrome OS by the end of the year.

Apple iPad Rumor Roundup

Hey, new Kindle Fire? Get ready for some competition.

A hot new rumor from the redoubtable Apple reporter John Paczkowski indicates that Apple is planning an event for Oct. 22, at which it is expected to announced its new line of iPads. Specifically, rumors suggest that the company will introduce a fifth-generation iPad, an iPad mini 2, a new iMac and a new Mac Pro at the Tuesday event.

So: What can you expect from those new iDevices? Well, with a special focus on the two updated tablets, here’s what we’re looking for on Oct. 22, based on all the leaks and gossip in the ever-active Apple rumor mill.

The new iPad 5 (or fifth generation) will look a whole lot more like a larger iPad mini, with the side bezels on the new iPad shrunk down quite a bit, reports BGR. That will be the big cosmetic change; and, according to The Wall Street Journal, though Apple’s full-size tablet will feature the same 9.7-inch LCD Retina display as its predecessor, it should be lighter and a bit thinner, too, thanks to new in-screen technology.

As for the iPad mini 2, Reuters has reported that Apple also plans to add Retina displays, addressing a major perceived weakness of the first version of Apple’s smaller iPad; shortages in component manufacturing, however, may delay the large-scale release. You know what means? Long lines and wait times for the new iPad mini when it is first available.

Videos and images of the alleged casing materials of the new iPad and iPad mini, courtesy of iPhone 5s and 5c rumor source Sonny Dickson, show that the color options may match some of the new iPhone 5s options, coming in space gray, gold and silver. And though there’s been much speculation about whether the new iPads will come packed with Apple’s Touch ID finger print sensor, the video below, from Unbox Therapy’s Lewis Hilsenteger, shows that the new iPad casing he was able to get his hands on fits perfectly with the Touch ID component pulled from his

iPhone 5s.

Apple’s newest iPad has traditionally been shipped with the latest installment of its A-chip processor iPad 2 debuted the A5, iPad 3 the A5X and the fourth generation iPad the A6X but the iPad mini was introduced last year with the year-and-a-half-old A5. This time around, analysts say, Apple plans to bring all new devices up to speed with its 64-bit architecture, with either an A7 or A7X processor. Dickson has also tweeted that the iPad mini will ship with a 64-bit A7 processor.

The cameras on the new iPads may also get a spec bump, bringing them up to speed with the new iPhone 5s shooter, according to analyst Ming-Chi Kuo. "We expect the upgrade will include 8MP rear camera, up from 5MP, and larger aperture. Lens module ASP will rise 10-20% on this optics spec upgrade," he said in a report obtained by 9to5Mac.

The purported Oct. 22 Apple event would fall on the same date as Microsoft’s release of the new Surface 2 and Surface Pro 2 tablets. Will you be out grabbing a Surface, or will you be waiting to see what Apple actually delivers before making your next tablet decision?

Yahoo Pretties Email To Woo Google Users

Yahoo on Tuesday spruced up its free Web-based email service as chief Marissa Mayer continued her quest to win users from rival Google for online tasks people tend to daily.

Upgrades to Yahoo Mail rolled out to mark its 16th birthday included letting people pretty up screens with images from Flickr, a photo-sharing service owned by the California-based Internet pioneer.

"Today is Yahoo Mail’s sweet 16, and to celebrate we’re making our Mail experience elegant and intuitive on desktop, iOS, and Android," senior vice president of communication products Jeffrey Bonforte said, referencing versions tailored for mobile devices powered by Apple or Google-backed Android operating systems.

Improvements include adding to free email accounts features such as disposable addresses and automated message forwarding that were previously available online in a premium version of the service, according to Yahoo.

Yahoo also ramped the amount of digital storage space per account up to a terabyte.

The new Yahoo Mail was available in English in nine countries including Britain, India, New Zealand, the Phillipines, and the United States with "more countries and languages coming soon," Bonforte said.

Applications tailored for Apple, Android, and Windows mobile devices were available globally, according to Yahoo.

Global PC Shipments Fall for 6th Quarter in Row

Worldwide shipments of personal computers fell in the third quarter of the

year, the sixth straight quarter of decline as cheaper tablet computers and smartphones cut into demand, according to market research firms IDC and Gartner Inc.

IDC said the market fell nearly 8 percent, to 81.6 million units, while Gartner put the decline at almost 9 percent, to 80.3 million. The two firms define PCs slightly differently.

IDC expects that the PC market will hit bottom sometime next year, with a recovery starting in 2015 as companies and consumers finally replace aging PCs. Gartner says this year will be the worst, with flat shipments next year and single-digit percentage growth in 2015.

"There's sort of a rubber band effect where PCs that need to be replaced will be," said IDC senior analyst Jay Chou.

Gartner principal analyst Mikako Kitagawa said that in developed countries, consumers won't abandon PCs, though they are holding onto them longer and spending money on other gadgets before replacing them. "The overall market size will shrink, but at some point those old PCs will be replaced by new ones," she said.

The U.S. market emerged as a bright spot in both reports. IDC said the U.S. market was almost unchanged, while Gartner said it rose 3.5 percent. Gartner credited low supplies and Intel's new low-power Haswell line of chips with helping boost demand. IDC said falling prices of touch-screen laptops also helped.

The outlook for a stabilizing PC market was mirrored by Hewlett-Packard Co., the world's No. 2 PC maker behind Lenovo. In a presentation before analysts Wednesday, the company predicted "stabilizing revenue declines" for its upcoming fiscal year, which starts in November.

The top 3 PC sellers Lenovo, HP and Dell all grew shipments between zero and 3 percent during the quarter, thanks in part to a healthy U.S. market, both research firms said. Acer and Asus suffered steep declines.

IDC said Acer and Asus suffered declines of about 34 percent, while Gartner pegged the drop at nearly 23 percent.

IDC said Acer suffered from weak consumer spending while Asus was hurt by a lack of corporate customers.

The Most & Least Wired Countries Revealed

Kids these days. Always on their computers and cellphones "surfing the net."

While it may seem like young people are always using the Internet, it's perhaps surprising that only 30 percent of people ages 15 to 24 worldwide are "digital natives," meaning they've been active on the Internet for at least five years, new research shows.

The award for the most wired youth goes to South Korea, where more than 99.6 percent of young people actively use the Internet, according to a report published Oct. 7 by the International Telecommunication Union, a branch of the United Nations that focuses on information and

communication technologies. [The 20 Most and Least Wired Countries]

In the United States, nearly 96 percent of people ages 15 to 24 are digital natives, according to a statement from Georgia Tech, whose researchers were involved in the study. That puts the U.S. behind Japan and several European countries like Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Timor-Leste, a small country in the southwest Pacific also known as East Timor, had the lowest percentage of digital natives, with less than 1 percent.

But the more important number is the proportion of young digital natives to each country's overall population, said Michael Best, a researcher at Georgia Tech a co-author of the study. "That's because a country's future will be defined by today's young people and by technology," Best said in a statement. "Countries with a high proportion of young people who are already online are positioned to define and lead the digital age of tomorrow."

When using this figure the percentage of digital natives out of the country's total population the United States did a bit better, coming in sixth overall (13.1 percent). The top place in this category goes to Iceland, at 13.9 percent. Malaysia comes in fourth with 13.4 percent. Malaysia, a middle-income country, has a "strong history of investing in educational technology," according to the release.

Countries with the lowest percentage of digital natives compared with total population are Timor-Leste, Myanmar and Sierra Leone. All of the bottom 10 countries are Asian or African nations, many of which are in the midst of conflict and/or have low Internet availability and thus low Internet usage, the statement noted.

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